

Creating a Talent Pipeline for Utah's Engineering Companies

Whether it is working on the latest in avionic technology or designing a new environmental habitat at the zoo, engineers are the heartbeat of Utah's growing economy.

Well-compensated, highly-skilled engineering jobs are helping fuel Utah's hot economy. Typical compensations fall between \$45,000 annually for a new engineering graduate to over six figures for a seasoned engineer with ten-plus years of experience. Nationally and in Utah, the need for engineering talent has increased significantly over past few years. Engineers of all specialties and fields are needed within a wide variety of industries and locations. "We can't educate and train engineers fast enough," says Jason Perry, Executive Director, Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED). "It is estimated that within the state over 1000 engineers will be needed in the next 12 to 18 months."

Although Utah's universities pump new engineering graduates into the pipeline each year, companies also need experienced people with

mid- or senior-level engineering skills. Where do companies find experienced engineering talent? Historically, companies have recruited from other local businesses. "While it is wonderful to have career mobility available to in-state engineers, it is important to realize that the net need in the state remains the same," explains Pat Vaughn, Director of Talent Access Programs at the Governor's Office of Economic Development. When an engineer moves within the state from company A to company B, there still remains an engineering vacancy that will need to be filled. With low unemployment rates, and the increased need for experienced engineering talent, the ability to attract new engineers into the state becomes paramount.

GOED has taken steps to help Utah companies address the engineering shortage by enabling companies to recruit from new, untapped talent sources. A taskforce consisting of the Governor's Office of Economic Development, Department of Workforce Services, Department of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation of Utah, the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce and various industry representatives has been brainstorming potential solutions. The result is the creation of a GOED-sponsored Engineering Recruitment Initiative (ERI).

The basic concept of the ERI is to reach out to experienced, engineering talent currently working outside Utah. The ERI Task Force believes there

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is quality talent eager to live and work in Utah. Most likely, these individuals are employed and not actively job seeking, so it becomes important to find a convenient way to communicate the message that Utah has engineering positions available. The ERI is looking at engineers who may have been educated in Utah but now work out of state.

Perhaps there are engineers raised in Utah who attended universities outside of Utah, found jobs elsewhere and would like to return if there were quality positions for them. Frequently, people come to Utah to vacation or visit friends and indicate how they would love to leverage their career here if there were suitable opportunities. The ERI wants to reach out to these individuals and encourage them to explore the wide variety of engineering positions now available in Utah.

To accomplish this, the ERI will be tapping into university alumni, professional organizations, and business community networks. The ERI encourages everyone to help spread the word that Utah is the place for career opportunities! ①

How You Can Help...

- Tell friends and family about this article
- Submit resumes directly to: resumes@utah.gov
- Sample engineering positions at: www.accesstotalent.com
- Apply directly on line at: www.jobs.utah.gov
- Send letters of inquiry to: TAPintoUtah@utah.gov or for information about the Talent Access Program go to www.goed.utah.gov/TAP

Why Don’t Utah companies hire more new graduates?

Approximately 1800 engineers graduate from Utah schools annually. Employers quickly hire this fresh talent. Lisa Christensen, Assistant Director of University of Utah Career Services, says that engineering students with high academic standing, especially those with related experience, often receive offers months before they graduate. Although new college graduates are an essential aspect to filling the engineering pipeline, it often takes time for a newly graduated engineer to reach a sufficient level of productivity.

John Hill, Vice President, Human Resources at L-3 Communications explains that in order to succeed, a company must maintain a balance between new graduates and experienced talent. L-3 hired 75 engineers last year and currently has openings for 50 design engineers. He says it can take up to two years for a new graduate to come up to speed on the company’s technology and processes. Typically this is accomplished through training and mentoring by more experienced engineers. As a result, new graduates are hired in proportion to the anticipated long-term growth of the company.